DEMOCRATIC

REC'D NOV 15 1961

GERMAN REPORT

Vol. X No. 20 | October 13th 1961 | Price: 15 Pf, 5c, 3d.

12th Birthday

By the Editor

On October 7th the German Democratic Republic celebrated its twelfth birthday. This birthday was really something rather special, for the following reasons:

1. The people of the German Democratic Republic, having pulled themselves up by their own boot-straps, and made their state one of the most productive industrial states in Europe, know today that they are over the worst part of the road and now forging ahead towards socialist prosperity.

2. The people of the German Democratic Republic are proud of the fact that, with the help of the other socialist countries, they have established, on a very solid basis, the first German state in history which is not dominated by militarists and expansionists.

3. The people of the German Democratic Republic have the satisfying feeling today that their Republic, after being ignored and shunned by the western world for so many years, is beginning to win recognition and respect in all parts of the world, and not merely in the socialist camp.

When the German Democratic Republic was established in 1949 by the coalition of anti-fascist parties, it had little but faith to build on. Today it is very much a prospering, going concern. It is finally breaking through the taboos erected by the western world, and in particular by the militarists who rule the roost in West Germany.

It is of interest to recall what the London "Times" stated in a remarkably clear-sighted editorial 12 years ago, on October 15th 1949:

"While, therefore, the western Powers need feel no particular alarm at the birth of the East German Republic, so long as they can avoid a new conflict over Berlin, it would be a mistake to believe that the new régime has no substance ... Instead of pretending that it does not exist it is wiser to recognise it for what it is — one more 'People's Democracy' imbued with a revolutionary toughness and persistence which may in the end produce results."

Now the results are here, for all to see.

Labour Party Zig-Zags Ahead

The Annual Conference of the British Labour Party decided on October 4th to urge the western powers to "accept a measure of de facto recognition" for the German Democratic Republic, and in a further resolution condemned West German military bases in Britain.

At the same time, rather illogically, the conference endorsed the support given to NATO by the right-wing leadership.

The resolution on the recognition of the GDR began by "condemning the action of the Communists" in closing the frontier in Berlin, and then continued:

"Conference demands that no further provocative action should be taken, and that negotiations should be quickly opened by the powers responsible to seek a peaceful solution of the problem.

"Conference believes that any settlement must include acceptance by the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic of unrestricted freedom for the people of West Berlin and of free access by the western powers to Berlin.

"As part of an agreement guaranteeing these rights, the western powers should be willing to recognise the present eastern frontiers of Germany; could accept a measure of de facto recognition for the regime in East Germany; and should propose an agreement on arms limitation in central Europe, including the exclusion of nuclear weapons, in accordance with previous statements of Labour policy.

"Conference further welcomes the proposal that the United Nations should be associated with any settlement of the Berlin problem."

Political observers in East Berlin pointed out that the resolution was inaccurate in some points, particularly in calling the frontier measures in Berlin a "provocation" when in fact they severely limited West German provocation; and that when it called upon the GDR to "accept unrestricted freedom for the people of West Berlin" it was only echoing clear and unequivocal pledges to this effect repeatedly given by the GDR Government. At the same time these political observers noted that the main suggestions made in the resolution (recognition of the Oder-Neisse frontier, recognition of the GDR, and arms limitation in central Europe) coincided closely with the proposals for a German settlement made by the GDR and the Soviet Union.

GDR MEMO TO UN

The Government of the German Democratic Republic submitted a lengthy memorandum on the German problem and the way in which it can be solved to the General Assembly of the United Nations at the end of September 1961. Most of the points made in this memorandum will be familiar to regular readers of GERMAN REPORT, but for easy reference the main points of the memorandum are presented in greatly condensed form on the following pages.

1. The West German Policy of Revenge

In the past few months the revenge propaganda in West Germany has reached a degree which can only be compared to the propaganda campaign of nazi Germany on the eve of World War Two. Leading West German politicians have made wide-reaching territorial claims on Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and other states; any attempt to implement these claims would lead to a nuclear world war.

A whole network of organisations have been founded in West Germany to whip up hate propaganda and war preparedness: they include 1200 associations of old soldiers of the Hitler Wehrmacht and the SS; 26 organisations of Germans resettled from eastern Europe, and about 50 other revanchist bodies. The work of these bodies is coordinated by a special "Ministry for Expellees". In 1957 this ministry had a budget of 31 million marks; by 1961 it had increased to 129 million marks.

The West German Government claims that it rejects any attempt to revise frontiers by force, but at the same time refuses to agree to a non-aggression pact between the NATO states and the Warsaw Pact states; it also refuses to enter into diplomatic relations with the People's Democracies, since it wishes to keep a free hand to conquer their territory.

2. The West German Policy of Colonialism

West Germany is pursuing a policy of neo-colonialism, with the support of the same diplomats and officials who worked for Hitler's colonial policy. In all disputes between the colonial and oppressed peoples and the imperialist states the West German Government takes the part of the imperialists. During the Anglo-American aggression in the Near East in 1958 West German territory was used as a base for the aggressors, and West German fighter planes flew escort missions.

West Germany supports the French war against the Algerian people with credits, and by paying occupation costs for French troops nominally stationed in West Germany which are actually fighting in Algeria. This support totals to date more than 3,000 million marks.

West Germany has given financial and scientific help in the French atom and rocket tests in the Sahara; the main French rocket-research station is jointly financed by West Germany and France.

West Germany has given big credits to the Portuguese Government, and supplied the Portuguese army with 10,000 machine rifles for use in Angola.

West Germany uses those funds described as "development help" in order to hold back the colonial liberation movement. Addressing the West German Parliament on May 5th 1961, Foreign Minister von Brentano stated: "The use of our development aid ... must be determined by political factors."

3. The West German Militarists Stoke Up the Cold War

To implement their revanchist and neo-colonialist policy the West German militarists need an atmosphere of international tension. Chancellor Adenauer declared in 1960 that the idea of peaceful co-existence was a "widely-held illusion".

The West German Government has rejected all concrete proposals for disarmament, such as the Rapacki Plan for an atom-free zone in central Europe; the GDR proposal for staged complete disarmament in both German states; and all proposals for the neutralisation of Germany.

The West German Government has stubbornly refused any form of negotiation between the two German states, and has opposed particularly strongly the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany and the peaceful solution of the West Berlin problem.

4. West Berlin's Role as Irritant

West Berlin plays a special part in West German opposition to an understanding. Although West Berlin is not part of the West German state, and lies in the middle of the German Democratic Republic, the West German militarists attempt to use it as a lever in their policy of aggression.

West Berlin is a centre for the subversive activities of West German secret services. The subversive activity ranges from attempts to stage a "rising" in the GDR to give an excuse for West German military intervention, to espionage, sabotage and assassination attempts.

Every year the West German state allots 1,250 million marks as "special aid" for West Berlin. A large part of this sum was used in past years for the organised press-ganging of citizens of the GDR to make them move to West Germany.

During 1961 West Berlin was used in a growing measure for demonstrations staged by West German militarist and revanchist organisations, at which propaganda was made for the annexation of the GDR and other socialist states.

The West German Government maintains illegally in West Berlin more than 50 government offices. The West German President has an "official residence" in West Berlin, and sessions of the West German Parliament are held there, although there is no legal basis for the presence of official West German bodies in West Berlin.

West Berlin citizens are illegally recruited for the West German Bundeswehr; more than 10% of the soldiers of the Bundeswehr come from West Berlin. Over 25 West Berlin firms produce war material for the West German army, including naval engines, submarine equipment, rocket guiding systems, and bomber equipment.

In the past few months the subversive activity organised in West Berlin had reached such a pitch that the peaceful life of the citizens of the GDR was endangered. The Government of the GDR therefore took effective control measures on the frontier of West Berlin, in exercise of the right of every state to protect its frontiers.

5. West German Militarists Talk of "Self-Determination"

In order to hide their aggressive aims the West German militarists, like Hitler, talk loudly about "the right of self-determination". Hitler used this phrase to conquer Austria,

Czechoslovakia and to start war against Poland.

The West German militarists talk of the "right to a homeland" in order to justify their claims for large parts of Poland and other countries; but they themselves have traded away the right of the people of West Germany to self-determination. In the Paris Agreement of 1954 the West German Government gave the British, American and French troops the right to remain in West Germany until the year 2004, and granted the western powers the sole right to decide on the reunification of Germany.

It is significant that the West German Government is pressing for a revision of the arms limitations laid down in the Paris Agreements, but not for a revision of the paragraphs which infringe the right to self-determination of the people of West Germany.

The West German Goverment has used police methods to suppress plebiscites on such vital questions as a ban on nuclear arms and the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany.

As long as West Germany is chained to NATO and occupied by foreign troops there can be no question of self-determination for the West German population.

6. Nuclear Arms for West Germany

Today the West German army is largely equipped with the most modern types of carriers for nuclear weapons.

According to NATO plans the West German army should be equipped by 1962 with 40 army rocket battalions, 28 air force rocket battalions, and 100 launching sites for medium range rockets. West Germany recently arranged to purchase US "Pershing" rockets to a value of $480 million; these rockets can only be used with nuclear warheads.

Now that the West German militarists have the carriers, they are pressing for full control over the warheads.

In view of the fact that the German militarists have plunged the world into war twice this century, nuclear weapons in the hands of Hitler's generals in the West German army would be a dangerous step towards atomic war.

Conventional armament is also being pressed ahead; the West German army today is almost 350,000 men strong, plus 20,000 men in the territorial forces.

To date West German rearmament has cost over 100,000 million marks; this is more than the sum Hitler spent in preparing for World War Two.

The West German armed forces are today commanded by about 160 generals; every single one of them served in Hitler's Wehrmacht in the rank of colonel or above. The majority of the senior officers served on the old fascist general staff, and the commander in chief, General Foertsch, is a convicted war criminal.

7. Hitler's Generals in the NATO Leadership

To implement their plans the West German militarists aim at taking over the position of leadership amongst the European NATO states, and making the whole of western Europe the base for their war of revenge. When the first stage of West German rearmament is completed West Germany will provide about 40 percent of the ground forces, 30 percent of the air forces, and 80 percent of the naval forces of NATO in Europe.

They claim staff positions in NATO in equivalent proportion, and today NATO staffs include a total of over 1200 West German military men, including 20 generals.

General Adolf Heusinger, formerly Operation Chief on Hitler's staff is today chairman of the NATO Permanent Military Committee.

General Hans Speidel, who helped Hitler oppress the French people, is commander of the NATO Ground Forces in Central Europe, in charge of 24 divisions of NATO soldiers.

Admiral Gerhard Wagner, Hitler's naval planner, commands the northern sector of the NATO naval forces in central Europe.

General Ernst Kusserow, formerly one of Goering's officers, heads the air defence staff of the NATO air forces in central Europe.

In the name of "integration" the West German armed forces have established bases, dumps, airfields, training grounds, etc., in Denmark, Belgium, France, Britain, Italy, Spain and Turkey. Further bases are planned in Portugal, Holland and Greece.

8. Peace Supporters Persecuted in West Germany

The West German Government rigorously suppresses peace supporters and democrats in West Germany, using in the process many old nazis.

The entire state machinery of West Germany is clogged with former active nazis. Of the 18 West German cabinet ministers, 12 are compromised by their nazi past; 50% of the senior officials of the Ministry of the Interior held key posts in the nazi governmental machinery. 84% of the top officials in the Foreign Office are former nazi diplomats, many of them seriously incriminated.

While full freedom is given to fascists and militarists in West Germany, democratic organisations are suppressed. Apart from the Communist Party of Germany, which has been banned, a further 200 West German organisations which supported a policy of peace and understanding have been suppressed.

In the past ten years the West German Supreme Court in Karlsruhe alone has opened investigations in 14,000 political cases. When all the political cases are added together, it is seen that about 250,000 persons have been involved in political trials conducted by West German courts dominated by Hitler's hanging judges. This reign of terror extends to citizens of the GDR who visited West Germany. Between November 1960 and February 1961, 229 citizens of the GDR were illegally arrested in West Germany and given draconic sentences by the courts.

9. The Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Cannot be Delayed

In the German Democratic Republic, in contrast to West Germany, the principles laid down by the Anti-Hitler coalition have been fulfilled and militarism has been uprooted. In the GDR there are no social forces

Win a New Reader

Fill in the name and address of a friend, work-mate or acquaintance on the form below, and send it to

Democratic German Report
Friedrichstrasse 167/III
Berlin W 8, German Democratic Republic

We shall be pleased to mail sample copies of the paper to him or her

Name .....

Address .....

interested in war, or which lay claim to the territory of other states. The policy of the GDR accords fully with the Charter of the United Nations.

The return to power in West Germany of the old militarist forces makes it urgently necessary to conclude a peace treaty with Germany. The West German Government opposes the signature of such a treaty, since it wishes to avoid any contractual agreement guaranteeing the peaceful development of Germany and guaranteeing the frontiers of Germany as defined in the Potsdam Agreement.

The German Peace Treaty would fix the present frontiers of Germany; it would exclude Germany from any participation in the arms race; and it would help towards the reunification of Germany as a peaceful neutral state.

The Government of the GDR is a firm supporter of general and total disarmament; but beyond this has repeatedly urged that the complete disarmament of Germany should be begun immediately and completed at the earliest possible date.

10. The GDR Stands With the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America

The GDR, in contrast to West Germany, stands firmly on the side of all nations defending their newly-won independence, and those still fighting for liberation from the imperialist yoke.

The GDR will continue to give its support to these peoples in their fight for national self-determination. It finds itself at one with these peoples, since the GDR itself is struggling to overcome the imperialist occupation of West Germany and West Berlin, and to guarantee the right of the German people to real self-determination.

11. The German Peace Plan Shows the Way Forward

The Government of the GDR, in contrast to the West German Government, gives its firm support to a peaceful solution of all problems affecting Germany. To date the GDR has made more than 150 proposals on this question.

On July 6th 1961 the People's Chamber of the GDR approved the "German Peace Plan". This Peace Plan lays down that the first step towards European security must be the conclusion of a German Peace Treaty, which would simultaneously settle the West Berlin problem. This would open the path to German reunification by way of the establishment of a German Confederation.

The Government of the German Democratic Republic points out that the military neutralisation of the two German states as foreseen in the German Peace Plan would be a very great contribution towards peace in Europe. Under the present circumstances, in which the two military groups confront each other directly, any incident provoked by the West German militarists could precipitate a nuclear world war. The military neutralisation of the two German states would provide a buffer between the two groups of states, and diminish the possibility of a clash. This could also be a decisive step towards an atom-free zone and militarily thinned-out zone in Europe.

The military neutrality of the two German states would be achieved by banning atomic arms in the whole of Germany, the withdrawal of all foreign troops, and finally by both German states leaving the military groupings (NATO and Warsaw Pact).

The GDR has also proposed that the main powers of the Anti-Hitler Coalition should guarantee the inviolability of the military neutrality of the two German states.

The Government of the GDR appeals to all member states of the United Nations to support the peace-loving forces of the German people in their efforts to secure peace in Germany. This entails:

1. Taking action against West German militarism and the war danger which it represents.
2. Preventing the nuclear armament of West Germany.
3. Finally ending the Second World War by the conclusion of a peace treaty with both German states.

. . . and Bonn's Counter-Memo

By our Diplomatic Correspondent

On October 5th the West German Government submitted a counter-memorandum to the United Nations, attempting to answer some of the points made by the GDR memorandum summarised above.

The Bonn memorandum could make no serious attempt to reply to the very specific charges made by the GDR about the degree of renazification in all branches of the West German military forces and administration, and confined itself to stating: "All these charges are absurd and baseless".

The West German memorandum attacked in particular the GDR plea for a peace treaty with Germany, arguing that such a treaty would solidify the division of Germany. It based its argument upon a United Nations resolution of 1960 condemning any attempt to destroy the national unity of a country, completely ignoring the facts that firstly the West was responsible for the division of Germany by establishing the West German state in September 1949, and that secondly there are in fact today two German states.

The Bonn reply was just as weak in other particulars. In its memorandum the GDR Government quoted chapter and verse to show that West Germany was pursuing a policy of colonialism. The West German memorandum replied by stating: "This allegation is completely absurd. Germany has had no colonies for decades." The GDR memorandum, of course, had not alleged that West German had any colonies.

Referring to the passages in the GDR memorandum stating that West Germany was a military threat to peace, the West German memorandum stated: "The opposite is the case. The Federal Republic is the only state in the world which has rejected, on its own initiative, the manufacture of atomic, biological and chemical weapons." In fact, West German rejection of the manufacture of such weapons was imposed by the western powers in the Paris Agreement of 1954, and since that date the West German Government has been making strenuous efforts to have the ban lifted.

Finally, by means of a transparently dishonest mathematical trick, the West German memorandum attempted to show that the West German Wehrmacht was a small and harmless force, far outnumbered and incapable of doing any harm. This trick consisted of comparing the 12 West German divisions with the 20 Soviet divisions allegedly stationed in the GDR; "The military strength of the Federal Republic is thus only a fraction of the forces concentrated in the Soviet Zone" the memorandum stated. It completely failed to mention the American, British and French forces stationed in West Germany, forces considerably larger than the Soviet troops stationed in the GDR.

You Ask – We Answer

ODER – NEISSE FRONTIER

"There is a lot of talk in the papers about the Oder–Neisse frontier. What is it, exactly, how did it come about, and what are the facts in the case? Perhaps you can find space in GERMAN REPORT to give us a short summary." **E. G., Sheffield**

The Oder–Neisse frontier is the frontier between Germany and Poland, or more precisely the frontier between the German Democratic Republic and Poland. It has been a fixed firm frontier since the end of World War Two, but the West German authorities have always refused to recognise this fact, and have brought pressure upon their allies to refuse it too.

In the past few weeks there have been strong indications that Britain and the United States have decided to recognise facts, instead of hiding their heads in the sand; and firm international recognition of the frontier will be a considerable contribution to the stabilisation of peace in Europe.

Here are the facts about this frontier:

In the past few hundred years the border between Germany and Poland has wandered backwards and forwards, with changes of hundreds of miles in each direction. The frequent change in frontiers, German imperialist policy of the "Germanisation" of Poles in the territory they occupied, and the mixed nature of the population, in which towns were often mainly German in character, while the surrounding countryside was entirely Polish, made it impossible to draw any clear frontier on ethonological principles, even if there had been anyone who wished to do so.

In 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, and pushed the German frontiers far to the east once again. In the subsequent years of occupation, millions of Poles were uprooted to make room for German settlers, and a total of six million Poles were not only thrown from their homes, but were physically exterminated.

At the end of the war, in 1945, all the great powers were agreed that it was necessary to fix a new Polish-German frontier, a frontier which would be both easily defensible against any renewed German attack, and one which would provide Poland with a viable economy. In order to prevent a renewal of "fifth column" activities, to which German minorities in other countries have always been so prone, the great powers unanimously decided that the German population left to the east of the borderline, fixed on the Oder and Neisse rivers, should be removed to within the frontiers of Germany proper.

All this was agreed to by the Governments of Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union at the Potsdam Conference. It may be as well to quote the relevant paragraphs from the Potsdam Agreement, signed on August 2nd 1945. The agreement states:

"In conformity with the agreement on Poland reached at the Crimea Conference, the three heads of Government have sought the opinion of the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity in regard to the accession of territory in the north and west which Poland should receive ... The three heads of Government agree that, pending the final determination of Poland's western frontier, the former German territories east of a line running from the Baltic Sea immediately west of Swinemunde; and thence along the Oder River to the confluence of the western Neisse River and along the western Neisse to the Czechoslovak frontier ... shall be under the administration of the Polish state ..."

This paragraph of the agreement was supplemented by a paragraph dealing with the transfer of German population, which stated:

"The three Governments, having considered the question in all its aspects, recognise the fact that the transfer to Germany of German population, or elements thereof remaining in Poland ... will have to be undertaken."

And the transfer of the German population was undertaken, and it is important to note that it was undertaken with the aid of the British and American military authorities in Germany, who received the resettlers and in many cases provided the transport.

The opponents of the Oder–Neisse frontier, who are particularly vociferous amongst the unreconstructed militarist elements in West Germany cling desperately to a clause of the Potsdam Agreement which states the "final delimitation of the western frontier of Poland should await the peace settlement"; but at the time this clause was written, no sensible person assumed it to mean anything more than that the actual course of the frontier on the ground should be finally delimited: that is to say that minor revision might be made to avoid cutting a village in two, or allotting the ownership of bridges over the Oder, etc. The real finalisation of the frontier was accomplished by the expulsion of the Germans living to the east of the Oder–Neisse, and their replacement by more than five million Poles who now live and work there. If the western powers had for one minute considered reversing their frontier decision, then they should surely never have cooperated in the resettlement of the German expellees.

Now that the West German authorities are banging the big drum and proclaiming that "territory that was once German must always remain German", it is interesting to look back and see what leading allied statesmen in the west said about the problem in 1945.

Let us quote, for instance, from President Harry Truman of the United States. In a coast-to-coast broadcast on August 9th he stated:

"The new area in the West was formerly populated by Germans, but most of them have already left in the face of the invading Soviet Army. We were informed that there are only about 1,500,000 left. The territory that the Poles are to administer will enable Poland better to support its population. It will provide a short and more easily defensible frontier between Poland and Germany. Settled by Poles, it will provide a more homogeneous nation. The action taken at Berlin will help carry out the basic policy of the United Nations towards Poland – to create a strong, independent and prosperous nation with a Government to be selected by the people themselves."

And here is Mr Ernie Bevin, then British Foreign Secretary, speaking in the House of Commons on August 20th 1945:

"There was no escaping the course adopted so that the economy of the region might be restored and enabled to make its full contribution as soon as possible to provisioning a devastated Europe."

(Cont. at foot of next page)

School Days in East Berlin (I)

By Allen Mann

Despite changes and tension in Berlin, school is school, and all the children, big and little, filed back to their desks in the first days of September. One day later that month, I filed with them, but just to observe, and not to study. I carefully avoided the beautiful new schools built in the past few years and chose instead a rather ancient 3-storey affair in red brick like the one I went to as a child. It turned out to be the oldest school in East Berlin, in the borough of Prenzlauer Berg.

I paraded into school with the children at 7:50, but made a detour to Frau Muchow the school's director, a chestnut-haired woman in her forties who impressed me immediately with her combination of business-like efficiency and warm friendliness. I then spent the whole day talking with her, visiting classes and speaking with teachers.

The school has 15 classes, with an average of 31 children in each. The children start at 6 years (or early 7) and study here for a minimum of 8 years. Ten years will soon be compulsory for all children in the country, but today some parents still need convincing that ten years of school are an advantage for their child.

During their first 4 years, the children study German (mostly reading and writing) and arithmetic, as well as music, drawing and gymnastics. In their fifth year, history, geography, biology and Russian are added. The next year they begin with physics, and in their 7th year, chemistry. English, which is optional, and polytechnical instruction (more about this later). In the 9th and 10th class civics and astronomy are added, so that in their last year they have a total of about 14 different subjects – some of them only one hour a week, some of them much more frequently.

In addition they have after-school clubs and sports groups – boxing, handball, ping-pong and marionettes, sewing, cooking (with more boys than girls), baby care, and a group learning about "good taste in home and clothing".

A German Class

I went with the headmistress to her morning lesson – German literature for the 14-years-olds. The whole hour was spent discussing a little play making fun of greed and superstition, written by 16th century shoemaker-poet Hans Sachs, made famous by Wagner's opera "The Mastersingers".

There was nothing Prussian about the teaching methods. (By the way, Prussian methods—especially striking or beating children—are very strictly forbidden in the GDR.) Frau Muchow walked back and forth through the aisles, asking questions, trying to lead the children into a discussion of the subject, not calling on the same children all the time but trying rather to draw out the quieter ones. I was impressed by the way she never spoke down to the children, but used a fully adult vocabulary all the time, treating her pupils with full respect but never losing the necessary authority. The discussion moved rapidly, with no boring stretches, and the discipline of the class was very good.

Looking through the text book used, I saw that they read literature ranging from Goethe, Schiller and Heine up to Bertolt Brecht and Arnold Zweig, with stress on works dealing with the struggle against fascism, international friendship and solidarity, and the fight for socialism in the past and present.

Another Class

Cramped into a seat meant for a ten-year-old behind 30 restless little boys and girls, the latter all with bobs or pony-tails, I could hardly fail to be a distracting influence. But it was fun to watch this very uninhibited bunch of children talk about what they had or had not liked in school the year before, and what they hoped for this year. The teacher corrected grammar occasionally, but otherwise let them chatter on quite freely. This year's plans included trips to the theatre, and the Christmas market and visits to museums, to a big construction site and to a cooperative farm.

Learning Biology

The next class I visited was biology, for the 13-year-olds. The chubby, good-natured teacher obviously liked his subject—plant cells and chromosome fission that day—but he had difficulties keeping the class quiet. I thought back to the days when I had helped make teachers go grey and realised how difficult this profession is, whether in Berlin, London, New York or Calcutta.

Then came music, with the oldest class of 16-year-olds, lanky, blue-jeaned boys and almost-mature-looking girls. The young music-teacher played tapes of several operatic choruses to the pupils, and asked them to identify them if possible. A rather easy-going chap, he bantered with the pupils a bit, acted as if they knew more than they really did, but managed to get across details about Fidelio, Aida and other operas relatively painlessly. The girls were much more receptive than the boys, many of whom tried to act as if this were below their dignity. Yet a little over half the class raised their hands when the teacher asked who wanted to get a season ticket to the opera.

(Cont. from previous page)

Anthony Eden, Mr Bevin's predecessor at the Foreign Office, was more critical of the situation in a speech in the same debate. He stated:

"I cannot see how the Polish population can settle in these vast areas of Germany, man its industry, and look after its agricultural land to produce food for other parts of Europe."

It may be necessary to comment very shortly on what Mr Eden said. He did not see how the Polish population could do it: but the Polish population did do it. Today the land is being farmed and the industry is being run, and the only thing that could drive out the more than five million Poles who now live and work there would be another world war. That is just what the people in West Germany who clamour for a revision of the Oder–Neisse frontier want, and they do not deserve, and should not get, the support of a single person anywhere else in the world.

Incidentally the Oder–Neisse frontier was finally delimited by an agreement between the German Democratic Republic, which occupies the whole western side of the frontier, and the Polish People's Republic, as far back as 1950, so that even the claim that the frontier has not been finally delimited falls to the ground.

I stayed with this group the following hour, for my last German lesson of the day. The teacher who entered was an older man, in his fifties, the only teacher in the school over 50, I later discovered. Grey-haired and spectacled, he was dressed informally in a sport shirt, jacket and corduroy trousers. Today's lesson was about fables by the great 18th century German writer Lessing.

The fables were short and to the point, and the teacher tried to get the pupils to draw modern parallels. One castigated people who fawned to the authorities and then, from a position near the throne, looked down upon supposed inferiors. Another poked fun at travellers who saw only foods, wines and other superficial aspects of the places they visited. The teacher compared them with those who had visited West Berlin and seen only the bright lights and the shop window displays. The last fable—against vain copying of foreign words—was the basis for a discussion on Lessing's struggle against the backward feudal despots who divided Germany then and in favour of the early capitalist developments which spelled progress in the 18th century. That is why Lessing preferred Shakespeare's healthier influence to the backward fads of the effete French court of King Louis.

The following discussion, about Lessing's other works, was particularly interesting. "Nathan the Wise", one of Lessing's most famous plays, is an eloquent plea for tolerance between the three religions he knew of — Jewish, Moslem and Christian. The teacher asked why this had been the first play performed in East Berlin after the war. The pupils answered that it was meant as a proclamation of humanity and a protest against the barbarity and anti-Semitism of the nazis. Homework for the next class was to read a play called "Wie es euch gefällt" — in other words, Shakespeare's "As You Like It".

The Teachers

I later found to my amazement that this man, who had helped his pupils understand the brutality of nazi anti-Semitism with such quiet and convincing sincerity, had himself been a member of the Nazi Party. The headmistress told me that in 1945, after Hitler's fall, every single nazi member of the teaching staffs in East German and East Berlin schools had been dropped. But those who had committed no crimes or cruelties were given the opportunity to come back to the school system after showing their sincere rejection of nazi ideas in factories, construction sites and on farms. Some did not take this opportunity, of course, but went to West Berlin and West Germany where nazi teachers were soon welcomed. But others stuck. The man whose class I visited had worked as a carpenter until 1952, and was then permitted to teach again.

In my private conversation with him after class, I was convinced again of his sincerity and thoughtfulness. We frankly talked about methods to turn the naturally rebellious nature of adolescents into healthy channels in a socialist society. His ideas showed that he was thinking deeply about such problems, and I had already seen how this was reflected in his teaching.

All the other 19 teachers in the school were younger, and six or seven were teaching for the first time this year. They often begin as part-time teachers when they are only 18 or 19, continue their training 1 or 2 days in the week until they have passed all examinations, and then become full-time teachers after two years. Even as beginners, they receive 550 marks a month (about £45) — a substantial sum for a start and about the same as the average wage of an industrial worker.

Things were different in the early days after 1945, Frau Muchow told me. She is the daughter of a communist teacher who was barred from the school system from 1933 till 1945, and she and her father were among the first to get the schools back on their feet in 1945. After the nazis had been dropped from the school system, thousands of young workers and farmers had to be trained to take their places, within a few months time. They had to keep studying while learning, and sometimes this meant being only a few jumps ahead of the pupils. "And they were not paid 550 marks either! As I recall, it was about 250 marks then, and you could buy almost nothing for that sum in the first post-war years. Empty window-panes were covered with cardboard, we had only a few battered stoves for heating, and it was very cold. Yet there was lots of enthusiasm which you always find in a pioneering movement. We were taking the first steps towards democracy after fascism had been destroyed."

Democratic
GERMAN REPORT

Subscription rates: 4 marks, 8/- sterling, $ 1.25 per annum or pro rata, postage paid.

Subscriptions may be paid at the following addresses:

Democratic Germany: At all post offices.

Britain: Collet's Subscription Dept: 45 Museum St. London W, C. 1

Experiments

In recent years, after education had moved out of this pioneering stage, there were still many changes and lots of experimenting. One of the biggest changes in past years has been the introduction of polytechnical instruction. This is how it worked in the school I visited. From their 7th class—at the age of about 13—until they leave school, the children spend one morning a week in a factory. The factory, in this case a large Berlin cable manufacturing plant, supplies the teachers, usually from its apprentice training course. In their first year the pupils learn the elements of metal work — filing, boring, measuring and all the rest. In their second year they learn about electrical equipment and electricity, as well as the more simple machinery. Then in their 9th year they spend the time at a cooperative farm, learning about modern agricultural techniques. In their final year they return to the factory and learn to handle lathes and other more complicated machines.

The reason for this instruction is not only to prepare children for future life and help them adjust in an industrial society. It is also to teach them respect for the working people who pay for their schools and, for those who continue on to college and universities, who pay for their stipends. At the factory, they meet not only instructors but also veterans of many years of trade union struggles —men who fought for the 8-hour day, who struggled against the nazis, who lived through unemployment, inflation, police oppression and war—all things which today's children have heard of only by hearsay or in their history books.

But after this interesting and useful programme was under way in the GDR, teachers began to realise that cultural education had been neglected because of the pressure of the other subjects. Art and music had always been taught, but never stressed enough so that the children would gain not mere knowledge, but also respect and interest in a concert, an art gallery or an opera. Part of the reason for this was that the teachers, largely from working-class backgrounds, had not shared in the German middle-class tradition of learning to play the piano or following the latest art fad. Attempts are being made to solve this question, but it is not so simple, especially in East Berlin where until recently the bad influence of western comics and horror films was strong.

(To be concluded)

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

The odd things that people say and write after visiting Berlin are a never-ending source of amazement and joy to me. Some days ago a party of US mayors, including several from strictly segregated communities in the deep south, visited West Berlin to give the people of the city a few tips on the western way of life as they see it. During their visit they made a trip through East Berlin, and when they returned they babbled away to a reporter from the "New York Herald Tribune". Mayor Herschel I. Lashkowitz of Fargo, North Dakota apparently found East Berlin populated by zombies. "The people we saw seemed to be in a kind of trance; their glum expressionless faces followed us wherever we went" he said. I suppose the good people of Fargo either grin, weep or perform an old-time square dance when a bus-load of rubbernecking tourists passes through their streets – if tourists ever penetrate that far into darkest America.

But it was a remark made by Mayor Stanley W. Church of New Rochelle, New York, which really caught my fancy. "Some of the people we talked to were evidently pretty well brain-washed. They seemed to be going along with the East Berlin administration" he said. I suppose it is all very simple if you look at the world that way. Anyone who agrees with Mayor Church of New Rochelle is a fine, upstanding pillar of the western world; anyone who has another opinion has obviously been brain-washed.

Mixed-Up Muggeridge

But let us leave the US local luminaries to their strange ruminations, and switch over to mixed-up middle-aged kid Malcolm Muggeridge, one-time editor of "Punch". In the London "New Statesman" of September 22nd he sounded off on the two Berlin of today. His article mixes acute observation with other muddier impressions apparently acquired on bar stools in both halves of the city. One of his comments on East Berlin, for instance, is this: "Drunks are frequent, and one often glimpses alcoholically glowing eyes in a face which is otherwise pallid and dejected." I have no statistics on the comparative rates of drunks in the GDR and Britain, but I certainly saw more of them in London on a recent visit than I ever have in East Berlin.

But there is one passage in Mr Muggeridge's article which still puzzles me. He states:

"Though the wall has made no essential difference, its effect is to accentuate the characteristics of the two sectors. In the western part the many dogs being exercised look smaller, and those exercising them bigger."

If this paragraph means anything it would seem to mean that one of the characteristics of West Berlin is that it is inhabited by very large people with very small dogs; I would be delighted if Mr Muggerridge or some bright reader could clarify the situation and put me out of my misery.

While we are on the subject of animals let me drag in, once again, Target Number One – I mean of course Mr Terence Prittie, who is still, for some odd reason, the Bonn correspondent of the otherwise moderately reliable "Guardian".

This week he has committed no new gaffes in defence of his title of World's Worst-Informed Foreign Correspondent; I am simply diving back into ancient history, inspired by the unfathomable nature of Mr Muggeridge's remark about small dogs. On October 26th 1953, Mr Prittie wrote for the "Guardian" this deathless sentence: "The rulers of Eastern Germany do not necessarily believe in the principle of one parrot per proletarian cage." The rest of the article made no mention at all of parrots, proletarians or cages. I have tried the sentence with litmus paper and elementary de-coding methods, but the best alternative I can arrive at is "one carrot per proletarian page", which might make some limited sense if he had been talking about either hotels or newspapers; since he was reporting on price-cuts I am still at sea. I fear that the Case of the Proletarian Parrots will have to be consigned to the department of unsolved mysteries, along with the Marie Celeste.

Nutty General

A year or two ago the West German Parliament appointed a special representative to look after the morale and the morals of the new West German Wehrmacht. The man appointed, General Grolmann, was, of course, a former nazi general. He did not make much of a stir until early in September, when a Bonn Court quietly sentenced him to three months imprisonment for committing one of those "unnatural offences" which the "News of the World" used to report so lavishly. But it is not General Grolmann's private life which I want to comment upon; it is the fact that the court gave him only a nominal suspended sentence of three months because, they ruled, he was not fully responsible for his actions. In other words, he had a screw loose. Batty generals are not unknown in other countries, but I hope there are not too many of them in the upper echelons of the West German Army.

General Grolmann's replacement, incidentally, is a fine old nazi battle-axe named Admiral Hellmuth Heye, who during World War Two commanded Hitler's pocket submarines and later the heavy cruiser "Admiral Hipper". He has been one of Adenauer's military experts in the West German Parliament for the past eight years.

Odd Frontier

Readers may welcome a word of explanation about why the frontier through Berlin is such an odd and winding one; it is really weird in some places, where houses stand in East Berlin, but the pavement outside their front doors is in West Berlin. The reason is quite simple: when the sector borders were drawn up by the four allies in 1945, nobody ever imagined that they would become proper frontiers, so they run along the old borough boundaries. If you have a look at the borough boundaries in your own city, particularly if it is an old city, you will probably find that they are just as illogical as the jagged border in Berlin.

Incidentally, this question of the inconvenient and illogical border is another demonstration of the wisdom of sitting down and negotiating in good time, and not waiting until a situation has grown up which can only be settled by radical measures. Over the past few years the East Berlin authorities have repeatedly proposed to the West Berlin authorities that a number of such minor problems could easily be solved by negotiations between the two administrations; the West Berlin authorities have almost always turned a deaf ear. There are still masses of both minor and major problems between the German Democratic Republic and West Germany which could be settled, to the advantage of both sides, by simple face-to-face negotiations. Unfortunately the West German authorities are just as deaf and blind to reality as the West Berlin city authorities.

Edited and published fortnightly by John Peet. Democratic German Report, Friedrichstrasse 167/III, Berlin W 8, Telephone 22 29 68. Printed in the German Democratic Republic by (204). Veröffentlicht unter Lizenz-Nr. 694 des Presseamtes beim Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik